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Dear Interested Party:

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has recently completed analysis under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of a proposed action to translocate previously released Mexican gray wolves (*Canis lupis baileyi*) within the Secondary Recovery Zone of the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area (BRWRA) for management purposes. The February 10, 2000, Environmental Assessment (EA) entitled *Translocation of Mexican Wolves throughout the Blue Range Wolf Recovery Area in Arizona and New Mexico* is tiered to the 1996 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) on the *Reintroduction of the Mexican Gray Wolf within its Historic Range in the Southwestern United States*. The results of the analysis was a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) signed March 17, 2000. The FONSI is enclosed for your review.

The response to the request for comment on the EA has resulted in more than 9,000 comments submitted to FWS. Most of these expressed strong opinions, either for or against the translocation of wolves into the New Mexico portion of the BRWRA. All comments were carefully considered for new information or issues not previously considered within the EIS or which otherwise represented an error or omission in the EA. Many comments were outside the scope or decision making parameters of the analysis in the EA addressing whether translocation of wolves creates significant new impacts beyond those analyzed in the EIS. Copies of all comments are on file within the Administrative Record maintained by the Mexican Wolf Recovery Program at FWS Southwestern Regional Office, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

In order to implement the proposed action, temporary pens are needed at translocation sites to hold wolves for acclimation. Four sites within the Gila Wilderness Area have been identified, and the use of these sites is contingent upon issuance of a permit from the Gila National Forest, Wilderness Ranger District. The Wilderness District Ranger signed a Decision Memo March 20, 2000, allowing for immediate implementation of the proposed action. The FWS intends to install holding pens and translocate wolves to those pens without delay. This immediate action is being taken because of pressing wolf management needs. Two wolf packs eligible for translocation (Pipestem and Mule packs) have pregnant females. Translocating before denning and whelping facilitates wild adaptation of the pups and increases fidelity of the wolves to the translocation site.

Thank you for your interest in the Mexican wolf recovery program.

Sincerely

Nancy Kaufman  
Regional Director

enclosure